

MONTROSS, VA - Representative Rob Wittman released the following statement after Defense Secretary Leon Panetta announced further details in the Obama Administration's defense strategy:

"Today Secretary Panetta outlined changes to our military that, in his words, entail risk," Wittman said. "How can we be sure that in a rush to trim the budget that the risks our nation faces are not being oversimplified? Are we sending a signal to our enemies that our military will be weakened? Do the savings from the 2005 BRAC round justify another round of closures when we don't know the true savings of the closures? Cuts to our ground forces stretch thin our capability to respond to more than one conflict. I'm concerned about the proposals to trim contracting, which minimizes exposure to the innovative, forward-thinking creativity of the private sector. I'm also concerned about the proposal recommending increases in health care costs for retirees living on fixed incomes. I'm pleased that Mr. Panetta mentioned the importance of our aircraft carriers and our industrial base, but our nation needs to adequately consider these drastic changes to our military before taking action. America's industrial base was not built overnight. It took decades to acquire the skilled labor, assembly lines, shipyards, labs, and technical experts needed to keep our troops the best equipped fighting force in the world.

"Our nation's debt and deficit pose serious challenges, and there's no doubt that our federal government must be more efficient with taxpayer dollars. That said, providing "for the common defense" as stated in our Constitution must be a top priority. Congress and the House Armed Services Committee have a lot of work ahead of us to assess the risks built into this budget to ensure that the priority is on our strategic needs rather than simply allowing the budget to drive our military strategy."

Rob Wittman represents the First District in Virginia and serves on the House Armed Services Committee where he is the Chairman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.

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